

### **Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of the claims in the application.

### **Listing of Claims:**

1-42. (Cancelled)

43. (Currently Amended) A storage rack connectable to a tail gate of a vehicle for supporting a tire, comprising:

a load supporting structure adapted to support the tire when the tire is associated with the load supporting structure;

a bracket assembly connected to the load supporting structure, the bracket assembly being attachable to the tail gate; and

a lift assembly comprising:

a lift member pivotally connected to the load supporting structure; and

a lever connected to the lift member so as to permit the lift assembly

to be folded to a folded position and moved to an extended position, the lever forming a ramp when the lever is positioned

in the extended position whereby the tire can be rolled up the ramp formed by the lever ~~and subsequently lifted to the load~~

~~supporting structure by movement of the lift member towards the load supporting structure~~ and positioned on the lift

member, the lever being engaged with the lift member to permit the lift member to be rotated toward the load supporting

structure by lifting the lever so that the tire is transferred from the lift member to the load supporting structure.

44. (Original) The storage rack of claim 43 wherein the bracket assembly comprises a first flange having a distal end portion and a second flange having a distal end portion, the first flange connected to the load supporting structure, the first flange extending over and encompassing at least a portion of the tail gate, the second flange connected to the load supporting structure and extending over and encompassing at least of portion of the tail gate so that the tail gate is disposed between the distal end portion of the first flange and the distal end portion of the second flange.

45. (Original) The storage rack of claim 44 wherein the first flange of the bracket assembly is provided with a substantially U-shaped distal end portion and the second flange of the bracket assembly is provided with a substantially L-shaped distal end portion.

46. (Original) The bracket assembly of claim 44 wherein the first flange is provided with an aperture in the distal end portion thereof and wherein the bracket assembly further comprises:

a clamp member positioned between at least a portion of the distal end portion of the first flange and the tail gate such that a portion of the clamp member is disposed in a covered position relative to the aperture in the first flange; and

an adjustment member disposable through the aperture in the first flange for compressing engagement with the clamp member of the tail gate for securing the first flange of the bracket assembly to the tail gate.

47. (Original) The storage rack of claim 46 wherein the load supporting structure is provided with at least one threaded bore and wherein the bracket assembly is provided with at least one aperture therein, the aperture being alignable with the at least one threaded bore in the load supporting structure; and a threaded bolt positionable through the aperture so as to threadingly engage the threaded bore and thereby connect the second flange of the bracket assembly to the load supporting structure.

48. (Currently Amended) The storage rack of claim 43 wherein the load supporting structure includes a platform, and wherein the lift member is connected to the platform of the load supporting structure.

49. (Cancelled)

50. (Original) The storage rack of claim 43 wherein the lever is connected to the lift member near the distal end of the lift member.

51. (Cancelled)

52. (Currently Amended) The storage rack of claim 43 wherein the lift assembly further comprises:

at least one guide, the at least one guide connected to the lift member for guiding the tire onto the lift member.

53. (Original) The storage rack of claim 52 wherein the at least one guide is integrally connected to the lift member.

54-61. (Cancelled)

62. (New) The storage rack of claim 43 wherein in the folded position, the lift member is in a substantially parallel relationship to the tire when the tire is positioned on the load supporting structure.

63. (New) The storage rack of claim 62 wherein the lift assembly has a locking plate with a hole alignable with an opening formed through the tire when the tire is positioned on the load supporting structure and the lift assembly is in the folded position, and wherein the storage rack further comprises:

a locking member connected to the load supporting structure and extendable through the opening of the tire and the hole of the lift assembly; and  
a stop member connectable to the locking member to secure the lift assembly to the locking member thereby securing the tire to the load supporting structure.

64. (New) The storage rack of claim 63 wherein the locking plate is connected to the lever.

65. (New) The storage rack of claim 64 wherein the lever is pivotally connected to the lift member.

66. (New) The storage rack of claim 43 wherein the load supporting structure is configured so as to permit the tailgate to be moved between an open position and a closed position.

67. (New) A storage rack for a vehicle, comprising:  
a load supporting structure adapted to support a load, the load supporting structure being attachable to the vehicle;  
a lift member pivotally connected to the load supporting structure; and  
a lever connected to the lift member, the lever forming a ramp to permit the load to be moved up the lever and positioned on the lift member, the lever being engaged with the lift member to permit the lift member to be rotated toward the load supporting structure by lifting the lever so that the load is transferred from the lift member to the load supporting structure and subsequently lifted to the load supporting structure by movement of the lift member towards the load supporting structure.

68. (New) The storage rack of claim 67 wherein in the folded position, the lift member is in a substantially parallel relationship to the load when the load is positioned on the load supporting structure.

69. (New) The storage rack of claim 68 wherein the lever has a locking plate with a hole alignable with an opening formed through the load when the load is positioned on the load supporting structure and the lever is in the folded position, and wherein the storage rack further comprises:

a locking member connected to the load supporting structure and extendable through the opening of the load and the hole of the lever; and  
a stop member connectable to the locking member to secure the lever to the locking member thereby securing the load to the load supporting structure.

70. (New) The storage rack of claim 69 wherein the lever is pivotally connected to the lift member.